

CREATING THE MUSCATINE BRIDGE COMMISSION AND AUTHORIZING SAID COMMISSION AND ITS SUCCESSORS TO ACQUIRE BY PURCHASE OR CONDEMNATION AND TO CONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN, AND OPERATE A BRIDGE OR BRIDGES ACROSS THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, AT OR NEAR THE CITY OF MUSCATINE, IOWA, AND THE TOWN OF DRURY, ILL.

JUNE 18, 1956.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. BLATNIK, from the Committee on Public Works, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 11010]

The Committee on Public Works, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 11010) creating the Muscatine Bridge Commission and authorizing said commission and its successors to acquire by purchase or condemnation and to construct, maintain, and operate a bridge or bridges across the Mississippi River at or near the city of Muscatine, Iowa, and the town of Drury, Ill., having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

H. R. 11010 would create the Muscatine Bridge Commission and authorize said commission to acquire by purchase or condemnation the existing interstate toll bridge across the Mississippi River at Muscatine, Iowa, and to construct, maintain, and operate a bridge or bridges at that location. The commission would be authorized to fix and charge tolls on the existing bridge and any bridge to be constructed in accordance with the provisions of the General Bridge Act of 1906.

The commission would be authorized to provide for payment of the cost of the bridge or bridges acquired, reconstructed, or constructed by issuance of bonds which would be payable from tolls and other revenues of the bridge or bridges within a 30-year period. The commission would also be authorized to issue refunding bonds to mature within 30 years from the date thereof.

When paid for, the bridge or bridges would be conveyed to the States of Illinois and Iowa to be operated free of tolls. In the event appropriate agencies of the said States shall not be authorized to accept or shall not accept the same under such conditions, then the bridges shall continue to be owned, maintained, operated, and repaired by the Commission as toll bridges, the tolls being reduced so as to provide only such moneys as may be necessary to pay maintenance, operation expense, and repairs until such time as the appropriate agencies shall be authorized to accept such bridges under the conditions that the bridges be toll free.

GENERAL STATEMENT

Muscatine is a city of about 20,000 population. At the time H. R. 11010 was introduced there was one highway bridge crossing the Mississippi River at Muscatine. One June 1, 1956, this 160-foot span collapsed following a traffic mishap so that there is no bridge crossing the Mississippi at this point at the present time. The nearest highway bridge over the Mississippi River upstream from Muscatine is the Centennial Bridge, 29 miles east or northeast, owned by the city of Rock Island and located between Rock Island, Ill., and Davenport, Iowa. It is a publicly owned toll bridge built under an act of Congress approved March 18, 1938. Downstream from Muscatine the nearest Mississippi River Bridge is the McArthur Bridge at Burlington, owned by the city of Burlington, 49 miles south of Muscatine. It is a publicly owned toll bridge built about 1914 and recently reconstructed and strengthened.

Local witnesses testified that the bridge which collapsed on June 1 was built in 1890 and that they desire to create the commission as provided in H. R. 11010 for the purpose of replacing the bridge at the earliest possible date in the interest of public safety.

The Muscatine Bridge is located on State Road No. 92, which is a part of the Federal-aid primary road system. The road starts at Mendota, Ill., and extends thence, westerly, about 670 miles in Illinois across Iowa and into Nebraska. In addition to serving the interstate traffic on Road No. 92, the Muscatine Bridge serves the interstate traffic needs of a large local area in Iowa, in and around Muscatine, and in Illinois, opposite Muscatine.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

In enacting the General Bridge Act of 1946 (60 Stat. 812), as amended, Congress granted its blanket consent to the construction of bridges over navigable waters of the United States, thus making it unnecessary to enact special authorizing legislation which had theretofore been required with respect to bridges of the kind which would be authorized under H. R. 11010. However, inasmuch as the act authorizing the construction of the existing bridge was approved July 11, 1889, prior to enactment of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, containing the General Bridge Act (title 5) the committee considers it appropriate to approve H. R. 11010. Also, the legislation appears to be necessary as a prerequisite to the sale of bonds to raise the necessary funds to cover the cost of the project.

PRECEDENT

Legislation similar to that proposed in the pending bill has been previously enacted by Congress to create bridge commissions with authority to construct or to enter into compacts or agreements for the construction of interstate bridges. The City of Dubuque Bridge Commission, created by act of Congress in 1939, purchased the south bridge at Dubuque, built a new bridge known as the Julien Dubuque Bridge, dismantled and removed the old bridge, paid off the bonds issued to buy the old bridge and build the new bridge, freed the new bridge of tolls on December 31, 1954, and gave the new bridge to the two States, Illinois and Iowa. The City of Clinton Bridge Commission, created by act of Congress approved December 21, 1944, purchased both Mississippi River bridges at Clinton, removed the old south bridge at Clinton, is operating the old north bridge and collecting tolls therefrom, has let contracts for the construction of a new south bridge, and expects to have the new south bridge completed and open to traffic on June 30, 1956. The Clinton Commission expects to pay off some of its bonds on July 1, 1957.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

The Secretary of the Army informed the committee that insofar as the interests committed to his Department are concerned, no objection is perceived to the enactment of H. R. 11010. The Secretary of Commerce opposed enactment of H. R. 9620, a bill which H. R. 11010 supersedes, but most of the objections have been met in the bill herein reported.

No expenditure of Federal funds is involved in this legislation.



